(a) whether National Action Plan on Climatic Change (NAPCC) Mission on Agriculture is proposing huge financial investment for transgenic research claiming to be the solution for climatic crisis;

(b) whether it is opposed by farmers and civil society groups;

(c) whether Government has received large number of representations from various sections of society and eminent scientists urging for moratorium on GM foods; and

(d) if so, the action being taken by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) A National Action Plan on Climate Change was released by Prime Minister in June 2008 which envisages a National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture amongst its 8 National Missions. The National Mission aims at developing strategies to make Indian Agriculture more resilient to climate change through development of new varieties of thermal resistant crops, new credit and insurance mechanisms, better access to information and use of biotechnology.

Mission on Agriculture is proposing greater focus on dryland agriculture, risk management, access to information and use of biotechnology. The priority areas in biotechnology include use of genetic engineering to convert C3 crops to C4 systems for higher productivity at higher level of carbon dioxide, development of crops with better water and land use efficiency, development of nutritional strategies for managing heat stress in dairy animals.

(b) to (d) Different views and representations when received are dealt with appropriately on merits.

Investment in agriculture

†3261. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is working on a scheme for encouraging investment in agriculture sector;

(b) whether it is also a fact that price of sugar is high in Indian markets;

(c) if so, whether Government is taking measures to control the hike in its prices and also assessing the effect of foreign investment in agriculture; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir. Sugar prices in Indian markets this year are higher than prices prevailing last year.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The steps taken by the Government to control prices are indicated in given Statement (*See* below). FDI in agriculture is allowed upto 100% under the automatic route in

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

the floriculture, horticulture, development of seeds, animal husbandry, pisciculture, aquaculture and cultivation of vegetables and mushrooms sector under controlled conditions and services related to agro and allied sectors. FDI is not allowed in any other agricultural sector/activity. The Government assesses the flow of foreign investment in agriculture regularly.

Statement

Measures taken by the Central Government to augment domestic stocks of sugar and moderate sugar prices:-

- Allowed import of raw sugar under Advance Authorization Scheme by sugar mills at zero duty upto 30.09.2009.
- Allowed import of raw sugar at zero duty under O.G.L. upto 01.08.2009 by sugar mills. Later extended upto 31.3.2010. This has been further extended upto 31.12.2010.
- Import of raw sugar was opened to private trade upto 31.03.2010 for being processed by domestic factories on job basis. This has been further extended upto 31.12.2010.
- Allowed duty free import of white/refined sugar by STC/MMTC/PEC and NAFED upto 1 million tonnes by 01.08.2009 which was extended upto 30.11.2009. Further, duty free import of white/refined sugar under OGL has also been opened to other Central / State Government agencies and to private trade in addition to existing designated agencies upto 30.11.2009. This has been further extended upto 31.03.2010 and the cap on import of white/refined sugar has been removed.
- Levy obligation has been removed in respect of all imported raw sugar and white/refined sugar. The while/refined sugar has also been allowed to be sold at the discretion of the importing organizations but sugar processed from imported raw sugar is subject to accelerated releases.
- States have been requested to waive VAT on imported white/refined sugar so as to make the imports competitive.
- The levy obligation on sugar factories has been enhanced from 10% to 20% of production *w.e.f.* 01.10.2009 for 2009-10 sugar season to ensure availability of sugar for PDS.

Besides augmenting the sugar stocks by permitting import of raw and white/refined sugar in 2008-09 sugar season, the Central Government has imposed stock holding and turnover limits to moderate prices of sugar as follows:

- Stock-holding and turnover limits have been fixed for sugar dealers. Subsequently, Khandsari sugar has also been brought under the ambit of stockholding and turnover limit.

- An order has been issued imposing stockholding limit on large consumers of sugar who are using or consuming more than ten quintals of sugar per month as a raw material for production or consumption or use. The order is in respect of stocks of domestically produced sugar.

Futures trade in sugar has been suspended in domestic exchanges *w.e.f.* 27.5.2009 till the end of 2009.

Sale of paddy at lesser rate

3262. SHRI RAMA CHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that farmers of Orissa are selling paddy at much lesser rates as State Government agencies are not coming forward to purchase it from farmers; and

(b) if so, whether that is the main reason for farmers suicides?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Under the existing policy for foodgrains procurement, Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Agencies of State Governments purchase all the foodgrains, conforming to the prescribed specifications, offered for sale by farmers at procurement centers at the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

As reported by FCI, there have been no reports of distress sale of paddy by farmers in Orissa.

(b) No, Sir.

Insurance scheme for fishermen

3263. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is an insurance scheme for fishermen and fishworkers;

(b) if so, the details of the terms and conditions thereof; and

(c) whether it requires that the person concerned should be missing for seven years for the dependent to get the claim?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS) : (a) and (b) Under the "Group Accident Insurance for Active Fishermen" which is a component of the Centrally Sponsored 'National Scheme of Welfare of Fishermen, fishermen are insured for Rs. 1,00,000/- against death or permanent total disability and Rs,. 50,000/- for partial permanent disability. The benefit of this scheme accrues to the fishermen free of cost as the entire amount of annual premium *i.e.* Rs. 29/- per fishermen per year is subsidized by the Central and the State Governments on 50-50 basis. In case of North-Eastern States, 75% premium amount is subsidized by the Centre and 100% in case of Union Territories. All the fishermen registered/ licensed with the State/Union Territory Governments between the age group of 18-70 years are eligible for insurance